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David Scheffer's "Genocide and Atrocity Crimes": A Response

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I have to be honest: it was with some degree of reluctance that I agreed to *GSP's* invitation to offer a commentary on David Scheffer's paper. Not only has my involvement in genocide studies been explicitly on the academic, rather than hands-on activist or, for that matter, legal side, but also I have made abundantly clear in recent years that I do not find a *real* basis for genocide prevention either in Lemkinesque assumptions as to the development of strengthened juridical instruments aimed at buttressing existing international law or in military intervention against violators.¹ Genocide, in my view, has always been, to greater or lesser degrees, far too inextricably bound up with the conflicts and tensions of the broader international political economy ever to be isolatable to the circumstances—however singular—of any specific state. Nor do I believe it to be a phenomenon wholly treatable—and hence curable—in *its own right*, without respect, that is, to a wider and more holistic epidemiology of violence in the modern world. This is not to say that I consider that genocide can simply be subsumed within wider categories of violence; indeed, one of the most peculiar, if not bewildering, aspects of the phenomenon is the degree to which it defies most conventional, including social-scientific, analyses as to its origins and nature.² Even standard notions that genocide involves a *straightforward* bipolarity between one group of actors carrying out the violence and a second group who are its defenseless victims, while it may have salience on some occasions, I find increasingly wanting, on a variety of levels, with reference to many of the contemporary instances referred to as "genocide" today. Prevention of genocide, if we are to arrive there at all, thus requires, in my reckoning, not only a much broader engagement with the systemic sources of conflict in the contemporary world but a paradigmatic shift in our approach to the fundamentals of human life on this planet.

This view, then, is not only at critical variance with much of the guiding spirit of *GSP* but must inevitably lead to something bordering on outrage from many of its readers, who passionately believe that *something* must and can be done in the face of the most gross human-rights violations of our era. Darfur is very much at this time on the lips and in the minds of genocide activists and academics alike, as touchstone to this aspiration. The need for action, they argue, is as urgent now as it was over Rwanda a dozen years ago. As a matter of fact, I cannot but share the intensity of this feeling, not least when confronted with the ongoing procrastination, not to say faint-heartedness, of that thing we call the "international community." But what exactly is going to be the most efficacious route by which to deal with this particular affliction, not just now but later, and with all those other cases of mass atrocity that—whether correctly or incorrectly termed genocides—are likely to arise in the foreseeable future?

At least my initial reluctance to engage with Scheffer stemmed from one wholly erroneous assumption. I assumed that, given his background, Scheffer's propositions would take us further into the realms of high-minded legal abstractions without much

reference to practical implementation. On this score I was entirely wrong. In fact, a great deal of what he has to say is about bridging the gap between the legal and political arenas. On the one hand, his two propositions attempt to cut through a great deal of the tortuous sophistry that seems to notably encumber this terrain—and, indeed, to act as an inertial brake on action. On the other, they represent cogent, persuasive, even radical arguments for how a legally informed revision of current understandings of state-led mass violence might be translated into international political action on behalf of those communities that are its victims. I should add that I find Scheffer's formulations—in their own terms—perfectly logical and internally consistent.

However, this fails to assuage some of my fundamental disagreements with his operating premises. My engagement, thus, is as follows. I deal with his propositions only in so far as he develops the broad sweep of his argument, finding myself neither able nor competent to comment on the recent ICC or ad hoc tribunal judgments on genocide to which he particularly addresses himself in the last section of his piece. All I wish to state, so far as this aspect of the argument is concerned, is that the way international lawyers seem to be interpreting the meaning of “genocide” in a more elastic way than previously, and the degree to which this would seem to lead to their being less bound by some of the more inflexible and overtly legalistic tendencies within the original UNGC formulations, can only be welcomed as salutary.

Having then put to one side what I am not dealing with, my response will closely mirror the two primary issues of Scheffer's own explication. In the first instance, I wish to consider the degree to which his proposition—in effect, that attempting to move several steps back in the genocidal *process* presents a helpful way of “getting one's retaliation in first,” to the challenge of possible genocide—and, indeed, whether what he considers the relevant “precursors” to genocide are adequate for making a judgment that genocide is, in some shape or form, foreseeable. In the second instance, while I make clear from the outset my assent to his case for a broader codification of various forms of extreme violence, including genocide, under a broader atrocity rubric, I briefly comment on what meaning and salience this has for the international politics of the early twenty-first century. Finally, as will be evident in part throughout this critique, I restate what I think is the actual likely course of mass violence against non-state communal populations in the contemporary world and the paradoxical issues this must raise for the West—more specifically, the United States—in response to this violence. This, I posit, is fundamental to the issues that are at stake in Scheffer's argument, given that, when he talks about the response of the international community to genocide and atrocity more generally, what he *really* means is the response of the hegemonic elements in this community.

Genocide and the Issue of ‘Precursors’

“There is a critical need to liberate governments and international organizations from the genocide factor.”³ This is an extraordinarily arresting statement at the very outset of this piece. Even more arresting, arguably, is this later assertion: “What becomes important is the *action* being taken to prevent genocide rather than the search for the *crime* of genocide.”⁴ Scheffer's argument, in a nutshell, revolves around how the repeated logjam of international inaction in the face of genocide, or what appears to be genocide, can be broken. Or, to put it another way, how can legal instruments be reformulated in order both to enable political actors to act and to legitimate their actions *before* genocide explodes in the international community's face.

Thus, Scheffer's argument represents a direct response to the repeated plaint of all those who hold the notion of prevention dear and who have been increasingly frustrated and disenchanted, year on year, decade on decade, by the yawning gap between the ostensible terms of the UNCG, on the one hand, and the complete absence of UN-mandated prevention, on the other. Having listed a series of cases, throughout the 1990s and into the present century, in which he sees genocide as having occurred, and during which the international community mostly sat on its hands—culminating in Darfur—Scheffer argues that the solution does *not* lie in the strengthening of juridical instruments per se; that is, in a trajectory whose effort and aim is to *prove* that genocide has occurred, when it has occurred. This would be a classic case, anyway, of an "after the horse has bolted" response. Rather, Scheffer proposes a different, more thoroughly prevention-centered strategy in which the key is the foregrounding of the indicators of genocide at a high *political* level, presumably with the assistance of the international legal community, only so that these recognized indicators (or precursors) of genocide might provide the necessary justification and legitimization for the United States, the United Nations, or other leading elements within the international community to act against the perceived malefactor and to stop the crime before it occurs. In place of malice aforethought, thus, the international community is legitimated to intervene to disarm malice aforethought.

To develop this argument, Scheffer takes us more closely through the events leading up to the US-led NATO intervention in Kosovo in the spring of 1999—in which he was, clearly, intimately involved—in which evidence of precursors is identified and the relevant high-level bodies briefed and thus positioned to take the necessary on-the-hoof decisions both to parry and to prevent the Serbs' anti-Albanian action. Here, presumably, Scheffer takes Kosovo as a textbook example—albeit not an absolutely perfect one—of what can be achieved in crisis conditions. In this instance, military force was brought to bear to stop Slobodan Milosevic's intended plan of extermination and, in the process, to bring the threat of genocide to Kosovar Albanians, implicit in Serb domination, to an end.

Putting aside, however, whether we can determine with hindsight that Milosevic did indeed have a plan of genocide, and that this would have been carried out had it *not* been for the forceful NATO response, I find Scheffer's very formulation of what constitutes the warning signs of a forthcoming act of mass murder most significant in terms of what he *omits* to state. Thus, for Scheffer, the relevant indicators, or precursors, of genocide in Kosovo have a very short fuse, beginning only in 1998, when the Yugoslav army and paramilitaries began murderous assaults on a number of Kosovar-Albanian communities; these attacks were ratcheted up into the spring of 1999 to such a degree that all the intelligence and other data presented to the US executive, among others, pointed to the extreme urgency of a response.

This explication is neat but, unfortunately, avoids the degree to which the Kosovo crisis was both chronologically much deeper and embedded not only in the domestic Yugoslav problem (going back a mere 120 years) but, equally, in repeated systemic failures of European and other parties—including the United States—to respond to it not only much earlier but in an entirely more coherent fashion geared toward *avoiding* mass violence in the first place. Is Scheffer, for instance, being willfully amnesiac when he fails to mention that the potential for such violence went back at least to 1989 and that, while the pan-Yugoslav crisis that was a *direct consequence* of the Kosovar-Serb confrontation then shifted to more obviously bloody domains elsewhere in the federation, the potential for violence in Kosovo itself hardly dissipated?

The fact that this potentiality was held in check, we may be reminded, had much to do with the extraordinary, but almost entirely unsung, efforts of Ibrahim Rugova, the Kosovar Albanian leader whose Gandhian non-violence should have been amply rewarded at the internationally determined Dayton Accords in December 1995, where instead he was cold-shouldered, not to say utterly marginalized, in favor of plaudits and prestige for none other than the likes of Milosevic himself!

Now if Scheffer were to retort, "I agree, but how long is a piece of string? We have to begin somewhere for immediate precursors," my response in turn would be, "Yes, agreed, but that must surely be here in 1995, and, may I humbly add, with the *full* facts before us." With Rugova's position cut from under his feet by the wise counsels of the US, British, and other members of the Contact Group (alas, whatever the realpolitik going on here, we do not have space for it in this brief outing), the *immediate* countdown to disaster begins at this juncture, not in 1998. And why? Not so much because of the behavior of Milosevic, sated by his Dayton "victory," but, rather, because of the appearance of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)—a previously unknown group of utterly thuggish "freedom-fighters" (though in today's lexicon "terrorists" would be a much more suitable epithet)—who seemed to spring into life out of the blue but who, we now firmly and unequivocally know, were aided and abetted by none other than the CIA, not least through assisting their narcotics trade, and with the explicit purpose of building up military potential and thus creating enough instability in Kosovo to provoke Belgrade into a reaction.⁵ Which, of course, it did. Now, please forgive me if I appear to be suggesting that Milosevic, in this affair, was some sort of innocent party on the side of the angels. I am doing nothing of the sort. His entourage were utterly criminal—indeed, of a very similar frame of mind and propensity to violence to that of the younger Hashim Thaci on the KLA side, the only difference being that the latter now had the most powerful state in the world on side, as was clearly enunciated at the 1999 Rambouillet Accords, no less, when Madeleine Albright was able to engineer demands utterly resonant of what the Austrians, post-Sarajevo, presented to Serbia in 1914, with the aim of receiving either its capitulation as a state or resort to war.⁶

Now, readers may still feel exasperated by what I am doing here, not least because we know that, after Rambouillet, hundreds of thousands of Albanians *were* ejected from their homes, at gunpoint, in the spring of 1999 and then forced into frantic, terrified flight to the Macedonian and Albanian borders. The point that needs to be stressed, however, is that precursors to potential genocide are rarely so one-dimensional as Scheffer would seem to propose; they involve a dynamic, however asymmetric, between one or more parties, heavily exacerbated, of course, if both behave in an armed, violent, and ruthless manner (and regardless of the consequences for the communities who might otherwise be bystanders). Moreover, they are exacerbated further by critical omissions, or commissions, from elements of the "international community" that fuel rather than dampen the potential for conflict. This is not to suggest that the "international community" should do nothing. Indeed, what I have implicitly proposed, with respect to Kosovo, is that the alert to the danger signals should have come far earlier, and with a view to bolstering the *indigenous* peace parties evident in both Pristina and Belgrade. Instead, what is particularly egregious about this particular affair—the outcome of which Scheffer seems to think so highly of—is the degree to which its actually far from peaceful outcome involved the covert meddling and, ultimately, the *diktat* of leading international players, who were as complicit and responsible as either Milosevic or Thaci.

It seems to me thus, despite Scheffer's protestations to the contrary,⁷ that his tunnel-visioned view of "precursors" is ultimately meant to legitimize a single course of action: recourse to military—more specifically US, US-led, or US-sponsored—intervention against identified states. And this by willfully disregarding a different, broader understanding of what constitutes precursors, a holistic analysis of which might lead to a much more meaningful and non-hegemonic basis for the genuine prevention of mass violence. I do not particularly want to belabor the point, but the case is, arguably, even more poignantly and tragically made by reference to Darfur.

This, of course, was the subject of *GSP*'s entire first issue, in which, like Scheffer, three of the five contributors expended much energy expounding on the failure of the "international community" to intervene forcefully against the government of Sudan (GoS); one of these contributors went so far as to imagine an "international" assault that would, if necessary, "stand down" (I read that as "wipe out") its entire army.⁸ Significantly, in Scheffer's piece, precursors are again presented as very recent events, in this case appearing, he argues, in early 2003—by implication, in the form of GoS and Janjaweed assaults on the peoples of Darfur, although the perpetrators are not mentioned by name; by the same token, he gives us no indication that the conflict at this point was actually precipitated by the insurgent Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) surprise attack on El Fasher.

Let us, however, by way of counterpoint, be reminded of the most perspicacious contributions in *GPS* 1:1, namely those by Scott Straus and, especially, by René Lemarchand.⁹ Both have the advantage, unlike the other contributions, of being written by genuine area experts, as borne out in analyses of Darfurian events that show us much of their true complexity. Again we are presented with chronologies that go back to at least the 1970s or 1980s and with dynamics of conflict involving both domestic and regional actors, including interactions with insurgencies in the southern part of Sudan, major efforts at destabilization by Habré's Chad (and, in return, by the GoS against Chad), and for a while, even more notably, Gaddafi's Libya (now, of course, in the ranks of the most noble of noble allies of the West), in which *some* Darfurians were prepared to act as proxies to one or other of these several parties. Significantly, too, again not unlike the case of Kosovo by reference to Dayton, or, for that matter, Rwanda by way of Arusha, the internationally sponsored Navaisha power-sharing accords between Khartoum and the southern rebels left out in the cold a critical set of players, in this case those Darfurian elites who were seeking their own slice of regional autonomy. Precursors of genocide, however one organizes them in a matrix, seem to have components that arise with some frequency.

But there remains a problem even with this exposition. It all would seem to come down to *politics*, the obvious solution being that, if we could only get our social-science methodologies of these conflicts more finely tuned, we could then offer sounder policy recommendations on what to do about them. The problem with Darfur is that the underlying causes of conflict are very much more environmentally driven than that; the most consequential of these, as Lemarchand points out, has been the steady advance of desertification in this part of the Sahel, an early sign of which was the catastrophic famine of the mid-1980s.¹⁰

Here, then, we arrive at the fundamental dispute I have with Scheffer over the issue of precursors. Do we want to understand these indicators in terms of deep, systemic factors that—as in the case of Sahelian desertification—are driven by a variety of regional, but increasingly global, factors, above all anthropogenic climate change, which, of course, would demand of us an entirely more far-reaching project

for saving the people of the Sahel (and the planet entire)? Or do we *only* want to see precursors in a way that allows us—the West, the international community, whatever you want to call it—to deal simply with the most immediate effects, thereby, of course, putting to one side the deeper-set, and much more endemic, issues at stake?

In *GPS* 1:1, Samuel Totten's ire was particularly inflamed by a comment from Alex de Waal (in his own right a leading African rights specialist) proposing that the US determination, in September 2004, that atrocities in Darfur amounted to genocide was evidence of a "salvation fairy tale, with the US playing the role of saviour."¹¹ Though I am hardly as eloquent as de Waal, my own notes on Scheffer's argument include the jotting, "magic bullet?" What, above all, I read from his "precursors" formula is a method to expedite the arrival of the Seventh Cavalry: no history, no real engagement with why such and such country became destabilized in the first place, let alone recognition of the degree to which we ourselves have been complicit in the process. Just a neat and straightforward "stand down" of the bad guys.

Am I being obtuse for the sake of it? Well, consider other places where "Western" military intervention, for other reasons, is ongoing at the present time. Are current events in Iraq, or in Afghanistan, evidence that we are sorting these "God-forsaken" places out, or actually that we are driving them even further over the precipice? Or, to take a different example, did the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) "liberation" of Rwanda from the grips of Hutu Power really bring mass atrocity to an end, or did it simply export the violence to neighboring eastern Congo (presumably what Scheffer refers to as "possible genocide" in his exposition,¹² and to which I will return in conclusion)? Determining what events are the precursors of genocide is only ultimately of any value if you have a far-sighted view, beyond "zapping" the enemy, as to how you are going to bring long-term peace and stability to a country, a region, a globe. US neo-liberals and neo-cons alike may share a vision of a world cleansed of genocide. They may even continue to assume that the United States has the ability to act as some sort of global fire brigade, putting out genocidal fires—if only the right legal framework could be found to legitimate it; but, frankly, I see nothing in their current, or the more general Western, geopolitical rule book that gives me any confidence that "liberating" them to act against genocide would achieve anything other than the most short-term goals, based on a lack of understanding of the underlying causes of conflict, not to say botched interventionist practice that, if sustained, would ultimately be dictated not by humanitarian factors but by realpolitik founded on resource control.

Indeed, whether this was Sheffer's intention or not, the bottom-line logic I see in his proposition lies in its congruity with the increasing US trajectory—not least in the current administration's National Security Strategy—toward a preemptive war doctrine, that is, a policy of acting anywhere on the world stage where it perceives action to be appropriate and citing the genocidal proclivities of the sovereign target where it suits.¹³ There is here, of course, a significant if bizarre paradox. The US ability to act where and when it chooses is actually severely limited: some of the most egregious regimes that evince "precursor" symptoms, notably China and Russia, are completely off limits. The so-called "war on terror" also enormously complicates the picture, the ostensible US need to inveigle particular Muslim regimes into its program determining that a whole slew of potential or actual offenders, including Pakistan, Algeria, and, for than matter, Sudan, are the recipients of substantial rewards rather than the butts of obloquy, or worse. In effect, that leaves a relatively narrow band of sub-Saharan Africa, a limited zone in the Middle East and Central Asia—where the fossil-fuel issue is actually paramount—and, just remotely,

Central American, South American, and Caribbean states, plus a handful more in East Asia and the Pacific, where unilateral action against genocide might still be plausibly pursued. Doubly paradoxical, in the light of the non-action against Sudan following the US genocide determination, the chances that President Bush, alone or in consort with an ever-diminishing range of allies, will now act on the basis of "precursors" seems even more remote.

I could say several other things here on the "precursors" methodology and the assumptions that go with it. Suffice just one, with an additional codicil for good measure. Scheffer's exposition operates on an assumed linearity: namely, that genocide moves with some degree of predictability from A to B to C, and so on, toward ultimate culmination, very much like Greg Stanton's representation of the process.¹⁴ On this basis, a slew of potential genocide hot-spots, even within the West's given sphere, could have been anticipated in recent years. For instance, some four or five years ago, following this predictive logic, the potentiality of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe striking out, not so much against the remaining white community but, rather, against the Ndebele population, seemed quite plausible. But it did not happen. The situation proved dire and horrible, but not genocidal. The phenomenon *tout court*, is, in fact, distinctly non-linear. As a *general* rule it does *not* develop stage by expected stage but moves rapidly from A to M through one or more entirely *contingent* crises. And the additional point is this: even the assumption of intent, so fundamental both to the liberal theory of genocide and to its juridical corollary—an assumption to which Scheffer necessarily adheres—is founded, as Dirk Moses has so pithily and cogently put it, on a "radically voluntarist" narrative that "comes to the solipsistic conclusion that perpetrators commit them [genocides] *because they want to*... a consequence of *imagining* the world in terms of atomistic agents somehow free from the tangled skein of relations that mediate state agency and make it the articulator, however oblique, of deeper social conflicts."¹⁵ If we were to cross-reference these assumptions with Scheffer's "precursors" criteria, we could indeed view the world as containing upwards of a dozen countries at any one time that exactly meet his requirement for action. Is his proposition seriously then—ignoring my strictures about non-linearity or, indeed, the deeper systemic complexity out of which genocides emerge—to have US forces on some sort of constant stand-by to intervene unilaterally in each and every one of them, on the assumption that genocide *might* happen?

Atrocities and Beyond

I think Scheffer would agree, putting everything else to one side, that on a practical level this is today even less possible, or tolerable to a US public, than it was pre-March 2003. Indeed, in light of the ongoing chaotic mess—and human catastrophe—in the Middle East whose *immediate* causation has been none other than the actions of the White House, there are going to be very few countries left in the "international community"—not even, now, the United Kingdom—willing to stand up and be counted in this particular, ostensibly much more worthy venture.

That leaves, of course, Scheffer's second proposal, which I read as not so much about prevention as about post-event punishment. I have already stated that, as a general principle, I have no problem with the concept itself. By embracing genocide within a broader codified frame of mass violence, this second proposal provides an opportunity to move away from the often tortuous legal debates at the Hague, Arusha, and the ICC over whether such and such an event needs to be labeled "genocide." I note, too, that Scheffer's positioning on this score is in line with other "progressive"

opinion on the matter; that, for instance, in a 2005 UN General Assembly draft resolution, genocide was placed alongside war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity as something to which UN members have an obligation to respond—although, significantly, with the draft's original reference to collective coercive action expunged.¹⁶ Scheffer's position also harks back, ironically, to some of the original, largely behind-the-scenes objections to the UNGC, notably those proffered by French and British interlocutors who argued that, in practice, the convention would be inoperable. While the British would happily have dumped the whole proposition, the French favored the much more wide-ranging "crimes against humanity" formula.¹⁷ Scheffer's terminology is clearer, simpler—and fairer—still. "Atrocity," while covering a multitude of sins, speaks for itself as to its meaning, while at the same time firmly grounding what is stake in terms of prosecution, in ways that other formulations, such as "extreme violence"¹⁸ or even, perhaps, "crimes against humanity," fail to deliver.

What intrigues me, however, is how Scheffer imagines that his formula would be applied, in the context of the ICC, and against whom. As I am writing, the British and US governments are busily attempting to rubbish the estimate, made by a team of *Lancet* researchers, that upwards of 650,000 Iraqis have been killed since the beginning of the US-led invasion in 2003.¹⁹ *The Lancet* is an extremely serious and reputable British medical journal. Even if the death toll were much lower, there is no doubt that a huge humanitarian catastrophe is, now unfolding, day by day, the first cause of which is none other than the invasion. Under international law, each and every one of crimes against peace, crimes of aggression, war crimes, and, indeed, atrocity crimes could be charged against its initiators. As, for that matter, could atrocity crimes, for US and British actions in Iraq prior to 2003; for the ongoing imbroglio in Afghanistan; and, again, certainly with reference to Israeli actions in Lebanon, not least in the use of cluster bombs and the *intentional* destruction of Beirut's power plant, with untold environmental and epidemiological consequences for the people of the entire eastern Mediterranean.²⁰ One could, of course, go on endlessly down this route. I will refrain from belaboring the point. I simply ask Scheffer this: who does he imagine is going to be arraigned on charges of atrocity crimes, supposing that his proposition finds favor? Or would the sheer creaking weight of the caseload be so gargantuan that even the lawyers would blanch at the prospect?

I have gone on far too long. So let me be brief in conclusion. Genocide scholars are no different from the rest of humanity in wishing to live in a world free of violence. The question is how we arrive there. But perhaps the very aspiration is becoming increasingly inoperable. As the crisis of the twenty-first century moves toward its paroxysm through processes of accelerating free-market globalization, on the one hand, and the equally accelerating planetary rejoinder of global warming, on the other, the effect for humanity *is* going to be one of unprecedented violence. I am afraid I have no doubt about this, nor, as the struggle for primary resources—above all fossil-fuel resources—becomes ever more rampant and absolute, about who the prime promoters and destabilizers of this process are. I could spend considerable time venting my frustration on what is happening not in Darfur—I leave that to the good offices of *GSP*—but in the eastern part of the Democratic (*sic*) Republic of Congo, a region which has witnessed not "possible genocide," as Scheffer infers, but rather an ongoing spasm of atrocity that, particularly in Ituri province and the Kivus, is in every sense *beyond* genocide. Here, that phenomenon, at least in statist terms, cannot happen, because there is no state in power to commit it; instead, competing warlords vie with one another to control vast territories—backed by Rwandan, Ugandan,

or other overlords—in which atrocity has simply become a way of *life*. But the key question is, ultimately, what drives this madness; to which the answer, most simply put, is a voracious, inexorable search for more oil, more coltan, more timber, more primary resources, the transmission belt of which begins and ends in *our* overladen kitchens, our guzzling modes of locomotion and ever-so-“normal” postmodern modes of communication—the dead-end detritus, in other words, of a system of *consumption* entirely out of sync with the carrying capacity of the planet.

Eastern Congo, like Darfur, happen to be among the most vulnerable places on earth in relation to this system, because both represent, albeit in different ways, aspects of the tension between a traditional fragile human ecology and the demands of modern resource pressures as they are driven to their limit and over the edge. If one wanted to, one might refer to it as the “economics of genocide.” More accurately, the fate of these regions—it matters little what particular terminology one uses—is evidence in the raw of an emerging social-Darwinian zero-sum equation that, while increasingly prevalent throughout the world’s Wallersteinian peripheries, will, in due course, engulf the metropolitan core too.

To stop this now, what is urgently needed is our Western acknowledgment of the totality of the crisis and how we arrived here. And with this corollary: not simply a putting to rest of that can-do “culture of optimism” whereby the West assumes it can put the world to rights²¹ but an actual, US-led renunciation, withdrawal, and retreat from the principle and practice of hegemony. This may be more than paradoxical, and it could be read, above all, as tantamount to the abandonment of the peoples of Ituri or Darfur. But the last thing it actually purports is some old-fashioned isolationism, or, to put it less nicely, the notion that the rest of the world can go to hell while we concentrate on looking after our own. Indeed, even were we to want that, it could not be operable, given the overly complex, interconnected international political economy that we, above all in the West, have created. And least of all at this crux moment when the future of humankind hangs in the balance. What instead is needed is not an ostrich-like burying in the sand but a recognition that the *most* persistent drives to violence in the *contemporary* world—including that one very specific by-product which we call “genocide”—have arisen from the impossible demands of a Western-led historical development. Along, that is, with the acknowledgment that a non-violent exit strategy will demand a paradigm shift away from the assumptions, burdens, and unattainability of “full-spectrum” response interventions around the globe, not to say all the paraphernalia of the legitimating instruments that go with it, and toward a genuine economy of human scale; for us, and for the peoples of the Second, Third, and Fourth Worlds *equally*. The alternative is to add further fuel to a redundant yet predatory *economic* system that breeds, and will exponentially breed more, mass violence. Scheffer’s formulations, in short, are neat, elegant, and concise, but the assumption that legal formulas can somehow create the framework for the political prevention of mass violence in the twenty-first century is another example of looking at the problem through the wrong end of the telescope.

Notes

1. Mark Levene, “A Dissenting Voice; or How Current Assumptions of Deterrence and Preventing Genocide May Be Looking at the Problem through the Wrong End of the Telescope,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 6 (2004): Part 1, 153–66; Part 2, 431–45.

2. See Mark Levene, *The Meaning of Genocide*, vol. 1 of *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).
3. David Scheffer, "Genocide and Atrocity Crimes," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1 (2006): 229–50, 229.
4. *Ibid.*, 234.
5. Chris Marsden, "British Documentary Substantiates US–KLA Collusion in Provoking War with Serbia," *Sunday Times*, 16 March 2000.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Scheffer, "Genocide and Atrocity Crimes," 235.
8. Major Brent Beardsley, "The Endless Debate over the 'G Word,'" *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1 (2006): 79–82, 81.
9. René Lemarchand, "Unsimplicifying Darfur," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1 (2006): 1–12; Scott Straus, "Rwanda and Darfur: A Comparative Analysis," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1 (2006): 41–56.
10. Lemarchand, "Unsimplicifying Darfur," 5.
11. Samuel Totten, "The US Investigation into the Darfur Crisis and the US Government's Determination of Genocide," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1 (2006): 57–77, 65.
12. Scheffer, "Genocide and Atrocity Crimes," 231, 232, 248.
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